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THE WAR AND NAVY DEPARTMENTS COMMISSIONS ON TRAINING CAMP ACTIVITIES

BY RAYMOND B. FOSDICK,

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There was nowhere for the men to go and forget the weariness, the homesickness, the loneliness, that prevailed all along the Border when our troops were concentrated there in the summer of 1916. There was nowhere to go and get away even for a short time from the monotony of drill and the almost unbearable heat. There was no organized entertainment, no decent diversion. There was not even a book to read, or the facilities for writing a letter home. There were the small border towns with saloons and red light districts for their sole attractions, and from lack of decent diversions, the men gravitated there in their off time. Such was the situation I found, when Secretary Baker asked me to go down and make a survey of the soldiers' environment for the War Department. It is no wonder that there was an ingrowing staleness and tendency to mental and moral disintegration. It is no wonder an appallingly large percentage of the troops there were at some time or other disabled through personal immorality. There was a great need for something wholesome to compete with the only forms of diversion to which the men had access, and out of this need grew the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities.

Emerson's saying, that we never realize a truth fully until we have contended against it was fully exemplified, then, in the attitude of the War and Navy Departments toward the environment of our soldiers and sailors from the very first of their mobilization for the present war. The deadly effects of suddenly narrowing the whole life and thought of the naturally versatile and many-sided young American man, down to the inexorable round of military duties, had been thoroughly demonstrated. Moreover the men had heretofore volunteered their services; now they were to be drafted. The President and Secretary Baker determined that new social conditions must be created in connection with the military environment; camp life must be made wholesome and attractive. Already existing

agencies were to be asked to come in and coöperate, and wherever necessary these were to be supplemented by the government direct. The function of the War Department Commission, was the coördination of all these agencies, that there might be no friction or overlapping on the one hand, or unfilled needs on the other. A corresponding Navy Commission was created at the request of Secretary Daniels.

By a comprehensive recreational and educational program, the commissions have surrounded our fighters with such clean and wholesome influences as they conceived a democracy to owe to its fighting men. The undertaking was experimental. It was perhaps the largest social program ever undertaken. It was the first time a government had ever combined educational and ethical elements with disciplinary forces, in the production of a fighting organism. No one knew exactly what the outcome would be. New precedents had to be set. When one considers that the hundreds of thousands of men who began pouring into the army and navy camps had been suddenly wrenched loose from all their familiar social contacts of families, friends, clubs, schools, theatres, athletics, libraries, etc., to enter the bewildering military environment, the need of some rationalizing force becomes apparent if there is to be that *sine qua non* of fighting efficiency—contentment.

Broadly, the work of the commissions has fallen under two general heads. The first embraces a vast positive program set up to compete with the twin evils of alcohol and prostitution. The more perfect its development, the less the necessity for the other phase of the organization—the suppressive work. Working together to assist in supplying the former are the agencies that, already in existence, have been accorded official recognition and placed under the direction of the commissions.

THE CLUB LIFE OF THE CANTONMENT

The club life of the cantonment, for instance, is in the capable hands of the Young Men's Christian Association, the Knights of Columbus, and the Jewish Welfare Board. With its wide experience in army and navy work, the Y. M. C. A. was particularly well equipped to furnish recreational and social facilities within the camps, and it has made good use of the money privately subscribed for this purpose. In each of the national army cantonments, there

are from nine to fourteen "Y" buildings, and a somewhat smaller number in each of the smaller national guard camps. The Knights of Columbus organization has fewer buildings, but it is well represented and its functions are practically the same as those of the Y. M. C. A. The Jewish Welfare Board has not buildings in all of the camps up to the present time, and frequently holds its religious meetings in the building of another faith. One of the stipulations of the commissions was that no meeting was to be held in any of these buildings to which all the troops were not invited, regardless of religion. In fact the way in which all creeds and denominations are coming together is one of the miracles of modern democracy taking place within the camps.

The buildings brought into the camps by these organizations are so distributed, as to be easily available to the greatest numbers of men. A typical hut or bungalow presents a reassuring picture for those who have fears as to the social well-being of the uniformed men. Groups of men will always be found there occupying the rocking chairs and big arm chairs, smoking, playing games, or reading. A victrola and a piano are included in the equipment of each building and the men make full use of them. Around the entire wall space writing desks are built in, and these are never entirely deserted. It is estimated that more than a million and a half letters daily are written by the soldiers and sailors on the stationery that is furnished free by the Y. M. C. A. alone. The men soon learn that the building secretary is available day or night, and is not only willing but anxious to serve them as counsellor or friend.

Besides the Sunday religious services held in the auditorium which is a part of the equipment of each social building, moving picture shows, illustrated lectures, Bible classes, concerts, amateur or imported dramatic performances and indoor athletics provide attraction for each night in the week in each building. These are in addition to the programs provided through the large Y. M. C. A. auditorium which in the larger army camps has a seating capacity of 2,000 to 3,000—and the liberty theatre entertainments.

Much of that intangible "spirit of the army" is engendered in these buildings. I dropped into a Knights of Columbus hall one evening at the hour when the building was practically deserted, in time to witness a young Italian evidently as yet unfamiliar with his environment, rocking back and forth in his chair seemingly in great

anguish of body or mind. A young soldier left the group around the stove as soon as he noticed him and went up and began talking to him. The youth shook his head uncomprehendingly. Gradually the others gathered around him solicitously but it was apparent that he understood no English. They thought that he was ill and attempted to pick him up bodily and carry him to the hospital, and then he produced a letter,—the evident cause of his distress. It was in Italian. A hasty survey showed that the building secretary was absent. One of the men went to the telephone. I do not know whom he called up but the door was opened soon and another young fellow joined the group. They handed him the letter which he read, announcing that the recruit's father was dying in a town halfway across the state.

"There's a train in twenty-five minutes—let's get him on that. I'll call up headquarters," one of the men was saying while the newcomer addressed the Italian in his own tongue—but he only shook his head, thrusting his hands into his pockets and bringing them out empty with a shrug. Carfare was a small matter. Within five minutes, the little group had pooled their loose change and one of them was at the telephone again calling up headquarters, to arrange for a pass out of camp, while the others escorted their friend in need down the railroad track toward the station.

The camp clubs promote democracy and they also effectively bridge the gulf that lies between the recruit and his environment. By giving men a chance to express themselves, they help to preserve their moral relationships to society. Among the means of self-expression furnished by the Y. M. C. A. is "Trench and Camp," the soldiers' newspaper in which is chronicled all the happenings of the week. The paper is published in each army camp, and now appears in one naval training station under the name of "Afloat and Ashore."

IMPORTANCE OF THE LIBRARIES WITHIN THE CAMPS

Another important agency coöperating in this work within the camps, is the American Library Association, to which has been delegated the task of solving the problem of the soldiers' and sailors' reading matter. This organization has undertaken the seemingly impossible task of seeing that there is always a good book within reach of the fighting man. A special library building has been

erected or is in the course of being erected in each of the army cantonments. These are in charge of trained librarians. The entire work is carried on under the general supervision of Dr. Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, who has been appointed General Director of the Library War Service. That the public appreciates the importance of this phase of the work, is evidenced by the fact that when in September, 1917, the public was asked for a million dollars for the conduct of the work, the fund was over-subscribed more than a half-million; and in March, 1918, when the big book drive was started with a goal of two million volumes, more than three million attractive readable books were received at the time set for the closing of the campaign and more were coming in every day.

The libraries are conducted along lines similar to those in towns, but the books are taken out with less formality and a widespread circulation is promoted in various ways. Besides the central building in each camp, branches are maintained in the Y. M. C. A., Knights of Columbus buildings, the hostess houses, base hospitals, and in the mess halls and barracks, and books may be taken from any of these at any hour of the day or evening.

It is natural that a visitor's first question to the librarian should be "What do the men read?" The number of books circulated, generally, show that fiction holds first place, which is natural enough. A good story helps to tide over long, lonely evenings, when otherwise the soldier would be a natural prey to homesickness. But there is an almost equally large demand for books on pure and applied science. Men are doing a surprisingly large amount of studying and reading up in preparation for promotion. There are many sorts of specialties in demand in the army and navy today, and books on various kinds of machinery, gasoline engines, aeroplanes, electricity, chemistry and U-boat engineering are greatly in demand. An army camp is a cross-section of masculine American life, with all grades and classes represented, and the books in circulation in one day in any camp library will offer an interesting study, and will range all the way from a catechism, requested by a negro trooper, to the profoundest philosophical treatise. A librarian told me lately of a soldier coming to him with the request for "something interesting in the way of modern Grecian history."

"I think you will like this," said the librarian taking down a new book about the Balkan war. "Oh, *that!*" said the soldier. "I don't

want that. I fought all through *that* war," and he slipped his shirt off his shoulder, displaying a great scar. "I want something that I don't know all about."

The library work in camp is linked up definitely with the educational program being carried on direct by the commissions. In many divisions gathered in by the first draft, the percentage of men who could not speak a word of English was appalling. In the Syracuse camp, there was one regiment who could not understand the commands given them. Men from the Kentucky and Tennessee mountains could not read or write. In every camp in the United States classes in English, French, spelling, reading, writing and primary arithmetic were started, and are now being conducted. Two hundred thousand men are studying the French language at the present time, in classes run under the direction of the Commissions on Training Camp Activities. Vocational training classes are being carried forward; in fact, in every camp there are classes on certain evenings of every week representing all subjects from first lessons in spoken French to lessons in electrical engineering. In this connection, the educational machinery of the Y. M. C. A. is being largely utilized. Text-books of all sorts are procurable through the librarians, and those that are not immediately available are purchased.

Instructors are recruited from all sources. Men from the ranks are teaching French and other subjects. Men and women from near-by towns volunteer their services for certain evenings each week, and officers and chaplains are also assisting. It was recently estimated that more than 100,000 men were enrolled in our educational classes, and the number is growing.

OBJECT AND USEFULNESS OF THE HOSTESS HOUSE

The Young Women's Christian Association, by establishing the hostess houses in camp, has solved one of the biggest problems with which military authorities have had to contend,—that of women visitors to camp. In the old days they had to stand on windy corners, or parade the often wet and muddy streets: there was no place for them to go. Now they can go to this homelike spot and talk with their men friends or relatives amid pleasant surroundings. There have already been seventy-six hostess houses erected within the army and navy camps, and more are in the course of construction.

The hostess house is usually built near the entrance of the can-

tonment or training station, and is placed so as to be easily accessible to visitors. The buildings are like large bungalows, and are a decided ornament to the camps. They vary in size and architecture according to the varying needs, but their general plans are similar. They were designed and the interior decorations planned entirely by women. The "big room" of each house, which is a large, homelike living-room, has a large chimney, usually in the middle, where in the double fireplaces log fires burn when they are needed. There is found a parcel-checking room, a rest-room for women, and a fully-equipped nursery on the main floor of the hostess house. The rear of the building is usually devoted to a cafeteria for catering not only to the women on visiting days, but to the soldiers themselves all during the week. The upstairs is devoted to living quarters for the resident secretaries. Some of the women from the hostess house meet every arriving train to make sure that no woman is left to wander aimlessly around the camp. The commissions have asked the Travelers' Aid Society to place their representatives in the stations near the camps, and these work in coöperation with the hostess house women in assisting visitors to the camp.

On visiting days, the hostess house is filled with groups of soldiers and civilians. Some of the old army officers did not like the idea of the hostess house at first. "Send along anything you want to," they told the commissions, "but keep these women away." However, no personal hardship or discomforts can keep them away, so long as there is a chance of their seeing their men who are soon to go to the front. They come by the thousands. They come penniless, oftentimes. They come with stories of misery and want. The hostess house is a recognition of their rights to come and the hostess house is playing a large part in conserving the camp morale. The officers no less than the men are coming to look upon it as indispensable. Often now we hear from those who were loudest in objecting to the idea. They say that they are being discriminated against; that some other camp is getting a second hostess house or a special house for taking care of colored women visitors while they have only one. There will certainly never be another military post without its hostess house.

The Recreation Association of America was asked to organize the social and recreational life of the communities, adjacent to the training camps, for the benefit of the men in uniform. Working

under the name of the War Camp Community Service, it has placed trained workers in two hundred towns and cities and has mobilized the hospitality of churches, clubs, lodges, and other organizations, as well as large numbers of individuals. In a word it has aroused the community to its sense of responsibility toward the men.

The civilian public comes into contact with the soldier and the sailor for the most part when they are on leave. It is this phase of their soldiering in which the commissions take the greatest interest, for their reactions to the removal of restraint are apt to be the antithesis of those under the restrictions of camp life. Discipline, character, and ideals must stand the strain of an afternoon or a week-end away from the cantonment, for on those largely depend the physical welfare of the army and navy. Thus, it is obvious that the men must have "somewhere to go." There has been a gratifying response to the demand made on the civilian population in their behalf. The towns and cities adjacent to the camps have assimilated the soldier and sailor population in a remarkably effective manner. Instead of patronage, the men have been given genuine hospitality, and they have responded in kind. That this has been brought about by a national society working along almost scientifically exact lines, is a striking commentary on the personality that may go with the efficient organization of social work. Their well-tested theories and principles had to be applied to an entirely new set of conditions.

The personal hospitality of those who have entertained the soldiers and sailors, is one of the most heartening results of the work of the commissions, for it has developed closer ties between the men and the communities and acted as a conservator of home ideals. The war camp community workers as well as the workers back of the hostess house idea have found that one of the greatest sociological needs in training camp life, is the opportunity to see and talk with women. The boys want the feminine society they were used to back home; many of them want a bit of mothering; and the people of this country are doing a great work in seeing that they get this feminine society of the right kind.

These are some of the agencies whose already organized forces are aligned by the commissions. There is hardly a civic or social organization in a war camp community or within reach of service men anywhere, that is not coöperating actively in some branch of the commissions' work.

SOCIAL PROGRAM WITHIN THE CAMPS

But there were certain necessities that early became apparent in the completion of the program. The government wanted to send a singing army to France. From time immemorial troops have gone into battle singing. But they have not sung always in tune or as a whole. Song, even the random-sort, has a powerful effect on the morale of the troops, and we began to visualize the effect of our million and a half men being trained to sing correctly and in large groups. Accordingly, we have placed trained song leaders in the national army and national guard camps, and in the naval and aviation centers, and in many smaller units. This innovation met with scepticism in certain quarters. The relationship between singing and fighting was not apparent to the more matter-of-fact, but, as I see it, no other single phase of the program has made a greater contribution to discipline. Just what is the relationship? It is too intangible a thing to be analyzed. It deals with the essence of discipline—and back of that—morale, and one must witness a “sing,” where from ten to twenty thousand men lift up their voices all together, in some old familiar song that has become in a way a part of their national life, to understand its real significance. Our men are singing in France today, in groups or in units, and we have had an undeniable demonstration of the effect of music in the army and navy.

And then there was the matter of athletics which no existing organization seemed equipped to administrate in the army and navy. Educational and recreative athletics seemed vital in the development of the whole man. Athletics offers a legitimate expression for the healthy animal spirit which, when put up, will invariably assert itself in some form of lawlessness. Important as this is, the greatest function of athletics is to educate the men into better fighters. Men of skill and experience have been selected by the Commissions on Training Camp Activities, to take charge of this work. Among them are some of the foremost athletic coaches of the country.

Nearly all of the sports known to American life are carried on in the camps, and all of the men are not only permitted, but are encouraged to participate freely. A continually-growing emphasis is being placed especially in the army upon the semi-military sports. Trench-rushing, wall-scaling, grenade-throwing and boxing are all

being promoted. Boxing is conducted under the advisory direction of the most eminent exponents of the art,—men calculated to arouse the enthusiasm of our fighters in the making. It is taught both as a sport and as a part of the curriculum of a soldier. I have seen a boxing instructor stand up before a group of two thousand men and put them through a series of evolutions that would later be tried out in sparring contests, and eventually be invaluable to them in hand-to-hand encounters out in no man's land, for there is a close relationship between boxing and bayonet fighting. I have also seen games of soccer in which four hundred players took part, and soccer, too, is one of the forms of sport which has a close parallel to fighting. While playing it, a man must be ready constantly to strike the ball with either foot. In this way he naturally acquires the short gait and balance that will serve him in good stead when he comes to crossing furrowed and shell-torn stretches of devastated land. It is a highly exhilarating game combining the maximum of exercise and recreation with valuable training.

Besides the better known sports, such as baseball and football, there is a great variety of games such as volley ball, push ball, medicine ball, cross-country running, tennis, fencing and swimming. Laughter-provoking games are played regularly by great numbers of soldiers and sailors. This is important, for good humor is one of the vital elements of discipline. The men get a wild sort of joy out of "swat tag," prisoner's base, duck-on-the-rock, and such childish games as promote good fellowship at the same time developing self-control, agility, mental alertness and initiative. It must not be forgotten that all this is a part of the military training. Muscle must have behind it driving force and control for the winning of battles.

Supplying the means for theatrical entertainments is an obvious part of the program which has undertaken to create a rational social life for the men. Every army camp now has its well-equipped modern liberty theatre building, and the best Broadway attractions are being booked throughout the circuit so that the men have all they would get in New York. The national army camps' theatres have a seating capacity of 2,500 to 3,000, and the national guard camps seat 1,500. The naval training stations do not have the regular liberty theatres, but they do not lack for high-class theatrical entertainment. Many of the stations have theatres that compare favorably with the

best of those in large cities. Stations such as those at San Diego, Gulfport, and Hampton Roads, had buildings already provided in the exposition buildings that were already on the grounds, when the government took them over. These have been remodeled and adequately equipped for entertainment purposes. The marine barracks at Quantico, Virginia, has in its theatre scenery and a stage which are duplicates of those in Keith's Theatre at Washington. This building seats 5,000. In the marine camp at Paris Island, South Carolina, there is an auditorium seating 2,500. The station at Great Lakes has a large and complete theatre building. The only liberty theatre outside of a camp or cantonment is in Norfolk. Here, the Navy Commission has arranged to have the city armory fitted with stage and scenery. Although the theatrical situation has not been handled in the same uniform fashion as in the army camps, no naval training station has been neglected in the matter of adequate entertainment.

The government bore all of the initial expense of these theatrical buildings, but made no appropriation for the operation of the circuit. In order to raise the necessary funds for financing companies on the camp circuits, "smileage" books, exchangeable for admission to the liberty theatres or other charge entertainments in camp, were placed on sale to the public. "Smileage" sale corresponds exactly to the advance sale of theatre tickets,—good until used. The admission charge to the theatrical entertainments is usually from ten to twenty-five cents, with a few reserved seats sold for fifty cents.

The War Department Commission is doing more than entertain the soldier; it is helping him to entertain himself. Through a committee on military entertainment, dramatic directors are now being sent into the camps to train the men in organizing their own dramatic talent. Thus, with their song coaches organizing glee clubs and other musical units, the companies going over will be more self-sufficient as to their leisure time recreation. Nothing gives the men more joy than the forms of entertainment in which they themselves actively engage.

Not only the liberty theatres and other similar buildings, but the Y. M. C. A. and the Knights of Columbus halls are equipped with the latest type of production machines for giving continuous performance of moving picture shows. The War Camp Motion Picture Bureau, under direction of the commissions, has the co-

operation of the National Board of Review, in the selection and censoring of the best and newest pictures from the various producers. Arrangement has been made through the Y. M. C. A. whereby films are supplied to vessels in the fleet.

STEPS TAKEN TOWARDS VICE SUPPRESSION

The young American's instinctive preference for sound and healthy occupations and recreations, has been met on every side by all this positive, constructive work. Strict repressive measures have at the same time been taken against alcohol and prostitution, and vice and the opportunities for intemperance—those factors deadly to military efficiency have been reduced to a minimum.

The Law Enforcement and the Social Hygiene Divisions of the commissions' work, have assumed the responsibility of stamping out these evils. The Law Enforcement Division solicits the coöperation of war camp communities and their various public-spirited organizations, in carrying out the special Congressional enactment for clean conditions wherever uniformed men in any numbers go to spend their off time. It also utilizes every other form of law enforcement machinery, state, federal, and military, for effectively cleaning up and keeping clean the military environs. At the instigation of the commissions, California, Arkansas, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia, and Maryland have created state welfare commissions and have appointed executive secretaries to carry on the work of vice repression.

The Law Enforcement Division has created a section to deal with the problem of the camp followers, who always spring up by the thousands in war camp communities drawn by the lure of the uniform and the stories of fabulous salaries paid. This section aims to provide safeguards for these women and girls, many of whom are forced into paths of prostitution, by the unstandardized commercial and living conditions; to aid in securing laws against prostitution and street walking; to obtain institutional care for the feeble-minded; and to provide reformatories to prevent such women having to be thrown into over-crowded and unhealthy county jails while awaiting trial. The municipalities are taking over a part of this work and making appropriations to cover the salaries of women patrols and police-women, as well as the up-keeps of reformatories and detention houses. The responsibility is a civic one, and in some cases the city has been ready to acknowledge it as soon as the commissions have

pointed out just where it lay. In other cases, the expense is being divided.

The Social Hygiene Division is educational in its function, having been created for the purpose of informing the public, both men and women, as well as army and navy, as to the necessity of combating prostitution and the resultant venereal diseases. The section devoted to the education of soldiers, sailors, and others in the service, has reached millions of men with lectures illustrated with official stereopticon slides and with informative pamphlets. The section on men's work seeks the aid of prominent citizens in bringing about local reforms, and in the revival of laws which have never been enforced, or the passing of new laws in support of the government's program against vice and liquor. The Section of Women's Work was planned to bring the women of the country to a sense of their responsibility, in the big nation-wide campaign for clean camps and clean communities.

The war is going to be won by manpower. We have profited by the experience of other nations and have reduced to that small inescapable minimum, the percentage of men placed on the ineffective list through immorality. It is no longer news that eighty-nine red light districts have been closed and the venereal disease rate of our army and navy has been reduced more than fifty per cent since the beginning of the war. These are the most obvious achievements in the conservation of manhood and manpower. In the last analysis, the whole suppressive program but prepares the way for the building up of a fighting force with such ideals as will stand the strain of the great encounter on the other side and bring them back better citizens for the experience. To make men fit for fighting—and after—is just plain efficiency plus.